

# Family-Focused Courts

Families come to court for many reasons, and some families return to court frequently.<sup>1</sup> In 1998, litigants filed 5 million domestic relations cases—divorce, child custody, child support, domestic violence, adoption, and paternity—in state courts. Domestic relations cases constituted 34 percent of all civil filings. In addition, 2.1 million juvenile cases—delinquency, truancy, and abuse and neglect—were filed that year.<sup>2</sup>

To provide effective service to the public as well as to cope with high caseloads, the court system must make itself more accessible, even friendly, to families who need to maneuver through it. This article discusses the development of a “family-focused court,” a consumer-oriented court of either special or general jurisdiction that responds to this need. Such courts view families not as cases to be disposed of, but as consumers entitled to delay-free and competitively priced services. Family-focused courts provide access to services that heal and protect children and their families wherever possible as they resolve cases in a timely and effective manner.

Some of the approaches available to family-focused courts include the “one-family/one-judicial-officer” model of case assignment (used even by jurisdictions that do not have separate family courts), innovative methods of case coordination, and effective coordination of both court-based and social services for families. This article reviews some of these practices as well as measures for assessing court performance in a family-focused court. When appropriate, the article highlights as examples the practices of particular courts currently using these approaches.

## FAMILY-FOCUSED MODELS

A family-focused court usually assigns one judicial officer or a team of experts to handle a single family's case from beginning to end. The way in which information about a family is shared among courts is an important concern of the family-focused court. The court also strives to provide consistent representation and appropriate services to families. Not every family-focused court will use all of the approaches discussed here, but each will employ some of them.

### THE ONE-FAMILY/ONE-JUDICIAL-OFFICER MODEL

The one-family/one-judicial-officer model is often considered the heart of a family-focused court.<sup>3</sup> This approach is based on the premise that a judicial officer who is aware of a family's various legal concerns and social dynamics can make more informed and effective decisions than could several different judicial officers handling individual cases involving a single family. A single judicial officer can become more familiar with the details of each family's crisis and better address the family's needs and foresee future difficulties. Families might more readily obey court orders if they knew they would have to appear before the same judicial officer.

On the other hand, concern has arisen that a judicial officer's familiarity with a family and its issues will lead to prejudgment and that one judicial officer may not



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The increasing volume and complexity of family caseloads place significant constraints on the ability of courts to both address the needs of families and effectively manage cases. Many jurisdictions have instituted a family court to improve handling of family cases and coordination of needed family services. Other jurisdictions have developed innovative approaches that do not require a change in organizational structure. This article discusses components of a “family-focused court,” defined as a court hearing cases involving children and families with a consumer orientation. It also reviews five principles, based on the *Trial Court Performance Standards*, by which to assess a court's success. ■

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have the expertise needed to deal with them all. Experiments conducted in Oregon may help alleviate these concerns. In Bend, Oregon (Deschutes County), general-jurisdiction circuit court judges carry a general caseload but are also responsible for coordinating a limited number of family law cases. One judicial officer is assigned to a family and hears all matters, civil and criminal, related to that family. That judge becomes responsible for all matters relating to domestic violence, dissolution, substance abuse, criminal proceedings, and children's welfare involving the family's members. Because of their general experience, these judges have proved able to handle the diverse caseload of the unified court. Motions to recuse judges based on overfamiliarity and possible prejudice have been rare.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE ONE-FAMILY/ONE-JUDICIAL-OFFICER/ ONE-TREATMENT-TEAM MODEL

King County, Washington (Seattle), uses a team approach to oversee cases involving families engaged in multiple court proceedings or those who present single cases involving issues such as mental illness, substance abuse, or the physical or sexual abuse of children. The multidisciplinary team consists of a family court judge, a commissioner, and a case manager.<sup>5</sup> The case manager develops a case profile from a review of active and inactive cases involving the family, including existing orders, reports, investigations, services, and pending hearing dates. After completion of the profile, the team reviews the case to see if it qualifies for case management by a judicial commissioner.

In Wisconsin and some other states, commissioners decide uncontested cases and narrow issues in contested cases, thereby saving valuable judicial time. Such a pragmatic approach may seem to run counter to the one-family/one-judicial-officer model. Nevertheless, the American Bar Association urges both the use of a family court and the use of hearing officers, mediators, court social workers, and other court personnel to handle numerous tasks currently performed by judges.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps this variation—what we can call the “one-family/one-treatment-team” model<sup>7</sup>—better realizes the possibilities inherent in the family-focused court than does the “one-family/one-judge” model. According to Catherine Ross, chair of the ABA's Committee on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children, “[c]ourts should have well-trained resource personnel at all levels, including magistrate hearing-officers, special masters, mediators, court clerks, social workers, and other service providers, who can perform triage.”<sup>8</sup> Teams composed of professional court staff can proactively manage each case by providing intake, screening, assessment, calendar coordination, and case-monitoring services to the parties and to the judicial officers.<sup>9</sup>

#### CASE COORDINATION: SHARING INFORMATION

In Miami, Florida, case managers and other staff of the family court and the domestic violence court coordinate cases that affect both courts. Judicial officers in each court are informed of other cases involving the parties and of actions taken in those cases at the time of hearings on their respective cases. For example, the Miami-Dade County Domestic Violence Court obtains information on related cases from the restraining order petition prepared by an intake counselor from a personal interview with the “client” and from searches of civil, family, and criminal court databases. In addition, specialized court administration staff members assist all clients in preparing petitions for restraining orders, refer domestic violence petitioners to social services available in the community, and consider safety planning.<sup>10</sup>

This case management model facilitates coordination among courts to ensure that custody and visitation disputes involving domestic violence are adjudicated appropriately and do not result in conflicting orders. The model may require organizational, staffing, and data management changes, but it can be effective in addressing domestic violence issues coming before the court through its civil, family, and criminal divisions.

#### CASE COORDINATION: CONTINUITY IN LEGAL REPRESENTATION

Continuity of legal representation is an important feature of the family-focused model. Unnecessary delays may result when new attorneys replace old ones. Valuable treatment time is sacrificed while the new attorney becomes familiar with the facts and issues of the case. Family members feel more comfortable with attorneys who know them and are familiar with their problems.

Design of a family-focused court therefore should address whether continuity of nonjudicial actors who come in contact with a family (such as prosecutors, public defenders, and court-appointed attorneys) is important in a single case and whether one representative should participate in all of the proceedings involving a single family. For example, a court should consider whether a guardian ad litem who represents a child in juvenile court should also represent that child in criminal court. Different courts address these issues in different ways. In St. Paul, Minnesota, one prosecutor is responsible for all child abuse and neglect cases in the juvenile division and also oversees the attorneys who prosecute criminal charges that involve the same children as victims in the criminal division.<sup>11</sup> In some courts, one staff member specializes in screening cases. Examples include the courthouse facilita-

tor in Seattle, Washington, and the Family Advocate Screening Team in Bend and Medford, Oregon.<sup>12</sup>

#### **CASE COORDINATION: USING CASAS**

Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) assist children involved in dependency, abuse, and neglect proceedings in thousands of courts nationally. The CASA's role is twofold: he or she is both an investigator and the child's advocate in court. The CASA gathers all relevant facts concerning a child's well-being and presents them to the court. In jurisdictions where attorneys do not represent child dependents of the court, CASAs may present recommendations to the court and act as advocates. In jurisdictions where an attorney represents the child, the attorney may use the recommendations of the CASA to assist in the legal representation of the child.

In King County, Washington, the court, through its CASA program, obtains the information it requires to determine which services are needed by children and families and how these services can be coordinated. With ongoing CASA assistance, the court is apprised of the effectiveness of its orders and of case supervision. If a subsequent petition in dependency is filed, the CASA continues to represent the child and may be appointed in that action as well. Research involving CASAs suggests that children and families served by CASAs receive more services from child welfare agencies than do children without CASA representation.<sup>13</sup>

#### **CASE COORDINATION: USING A COURTHOUSE FACILITATOR**

Courts that administer family law cases have needed to implement strategies to assist the large number of litigants not represented by attorneys (*pro se*). For example, King County Superior Court uses trained paralegals as "family law facilitators" to help *pro se* litigants. Law facilitators provide a wide range of services, from instructing court clients on which legal forms are needed to providing information on how to initiate or respond to a marriage dissolution. Facilitators also provide information about court rules, procedures, hearing schedules, and ways to improve pertinent court- or community-sponsored services and resources.

The assistance of family law facilitators enables a court to be significantly more efficient in its work process and product. With basic procedural questions being addressed prior to the hearing date, far fewer continuances of scheduled hearings should occur. More adequate self-representation should result in higher-quality judgments and provide more balance to proceedings when an attorney represents the other party.

#### **CASE COORDINATION: USING FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING**

Family group conferencing is an important means by which to advance child and adult safety and strengthen family unity. The family group conferencing model was adapted from a practice in New Zealand, where this approach was legislated in 1989 to address child welfare and youth justice issues.

In Bend, Oregon, where family group conferencing is employed, family members and related cases are first identified at intake. Families with cases before the family court are then referred to a screening team composed of legal counsel and representatives from agencies and local schools. This team is known as the Family Advocacy Screening Team (FAST); its primary task is to review the family status and decide if a coordinated treatment plan would be beneficial. It considers several factors: availability of family members, prior history of services with social service agencies, a family's willingness to allow agencies to share confidential information, and the complexity associated with the family's social, legal, and administrative issues. Following the screening team's review, many families are referred to a multidisciplinary treatment team for coordination of services.

The multidisciplinary treatment team, preferably with the family's input, develops a comprehensive plan based on family needs and interest. The team is composed of line staff and representatives of the agencies working with the family, staff from the children's schools, and the family's legal counsel. It meets jointly with the family and shares information consistent with signed confidentiality waivers. With extensive input, it develops a comprehensive treatment plan for the family and assigns a lead agency representative. The plan is filed with the court and monitored actively for compliance by the court coordinator through ongoing contacts with family and team members and at subsequent family-team meetings. Those accepted for coordination as a family case are assigned to a judicial officer. The court coordinator files reports with the judicial officer and participates in ongoing judicial hearings.<sup>14</sup>

#### **COORDINATING SERVICES TO FAMILIES**

Work to remedy the family crisis begins once the case starts moving through the court. In many instances, courts are service coordinators of last resort for dysfunctional families, matching the needs of individuals to the services available in the community. Courts are involved as direct service providers in some proceedings, performing custody evaluations, domestic violence assessments,

probation services, juvenile detention administration, mediation, CASA service provision, and certain community corrections functions. A single child may require the services of a number of professionals, whether provided within the court context or by service providers outside of courts. These might include, for example,<sup>15</sup>

- A custody evaluator
- A visitation counselor
- A child support officer
- A child protection worker
- A school district representative in a truancy case
- A mental health case manager
- A guardian ad litem
- A public defender in a delinquency proceeding
- A probation officer in a delinquency proceeding
- Court-appointed attorneys in a delinquency proceeding
- Court-appointed attorneys in a custody proceeding
- Foster parents

The court's role in the provision and coordination of services involving children and families is expanding, not because courts are assuming responsibilities once held by child welfare and social service agencies, but because they now recognize the need for coordination across courts and agencies. State legislatures often impose a responsibility on courts to see that services are delivered, and indeed, federal law calls on courts to monitor social service agencies.

No matter what models they employ, in all the services they provide, the courts must maintain the role of neutral arbiter. Social service agencies may advocate treatment or side with one parent against the other, but courts must maintain impartiality during the process and when making their rulings. In child abuse and neglect cases, courts can ensure that families obtain the services required by their case plans and live up to their agreements in other respects, such as attending anger management classes. At times, the sanctioning power of courts can ensure treatment. For example, juvenile delinquents may be ordered to attend counseling or therapy, perform community service, or attend residential treatment or training programs. By the same token, courts can hold social service agencies accountable to ensure that they provide quality services in a timely manner and to determine whether written permanency plans are sound. Agencies may need to defend their actions in court.

Effective processing in family law requires coordination with social service agencies. Courts must order, monitor, and enforce case plans recommended by social services professionals, sanctions carried out by law enforcement agencies, and mandates imposed by federal and state legislation. Professional staff is needed to coordinate the delivery of the multiple services necessary for children and their families.

#### COORDINATING SERVICES: USING LIAISONS

Several models of coordination between courts and social service agencies are in use. Under one such model, courts appoint liaisons to various social service agencies. In Delaware, for example, social workers from the Department of Services to Children and Families are located at the family court to coordinate the agency's activities. These liaisons also serve as an informational resource on community agency services to any official engaged in family court work.<sup>16</sup>

Representatives from social service agencies work at the Louisville, Kentucky (Jefferson County), court.<sup>17</sup> Each judicial officer has a social worker on staff who is present in the courtroom to assist in making determinations as well as in linking families to social services and to provide other nonlegal public and private assistance.

#### COORDINATING SERVICES: REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

Coordination may also occur at the community level, with both courts and social service agencies involved as active participants. Jackson County, Oregon, is a statewide leader in the comprehensive integration of services. Working closely with the state's Department of Human Resources, partner agencies have made great strides in eliminating fragmented service delivery to their clientele.

Recognizing the importance of creating a partnership with the community it serves, the Jackson County Court created a Family Law Advisory Committee (FLAC).<sup>18</sup> It consists of 12 judges, court administrators, attorneys, and court-related professionals and is staffed by the state judicial department. After considering several alternative models of coordination, in 1998 the Jackson County Court and FLAC created a Community Family Court, so named to reflect its commitment to partnerships with the community and service providers. This court not only recognizes that early identification of families in need of services requires both court and social services support, but also holds families accountable for compliance with court mandates and social services requirements.

In Jackson County, a "one-stop shop" houses 17 agencies and brings the local agencies together to work with



family cases. Of course, all 17 agencies are not to be involved in each family's case, but the new family court is an active sit-down participant with the agencies. The family court coordinator attends team meetings to provide information on court proceedings, participates in assessing whether additional agency services might be needed, and carries information back to the court. The court's administrator, Jim Adams, has suggested, "The family is our focus, not the court, not the court staff. So we're just one of the folks. We want to be flexible. We'll facilitate and coordinate when appropriate, otherwise not."<sup>19</sup>

## EVALUATING FAMILY-FOCUSED COURTS

With so many different issues affecting families and their successful court experience, gauging the success of family-focused courts is difficult. Creating a family court does not automatically guarantee that service delivery will be efficient and effective. Evaluation is needed to see where success is achieved and where opportunities for improvement persist. Some jurisdictions that do not have family courts may be more successful at delivering services to children and families.

To determine which procedures work best, courts must establish evaluation criteria. All procedures should be evaluated against stringent outcome criteria so that children and families benefit regardless of the court structure used by the various states.

Five proposed criteria for evaluating court performance on family matters are:<sup>20</sup>

### 1. Highest-quality professional court decision making

This criterion means that each case is given individual attention and similar cases are treated alike. It also means resolving the underlying issues so that families do not repeatedly return to court and are not required to make frequent, unnecessary appearances in court. Families' active involvement in determining a mutually acceptable settlement of the issues in dispute enhances the probability of a final resolution. It is very important to give each individual case the attention it deserves and to give each family member his or her day in court. Whether through structure or process, jurisdictions should move to consolidate legal issues when dealing with a single family.

To meet these objectives, a family-focused court must have judicial leadership that is committed, specialized, and in place long enough to mobilize community support. Judicial leadership is needed to promote the growth of resources and processes that will realize society's goals for the court and achieve

coordinated jurisdiction over the family. This type of involvement in the community is different from the traditional role played by judicial officers, but it is absolutely critical for a family-focused court.

### 2. Collaboration of courts and social service agencies to tailor services to the strengths and needs of families

Family-focused courts are most successful in a supportive environment where the community and all of its agencies work together to strengthen families and move them toward self-sufficiency. Some social service agencies have implemented policies requiring that the development of case plans be based on the strengths of a family and its members, and not be strictly deficit driven. The basic premise is that an integrated approach, through a family-focused court, will promote better-quality court decision making by providing judicial officers and judicial hearing officers with accurate and complete information about the family. It also will make the best use of limited community resources to strengthen families.

Indeed, by working together, courts, social service agencies, and the community may be able to increase the total amount of treatment and other services available to families. "Services" are broadly defined to include not only social services, but also community, school, and enforcement services. Both courts and service agencies need to ask, "Are families receiving the services they need, and are services delivered in a fashion needed to produce the desired results?" Courts need to coordinate with executive-branch departments, schools, and community organizations to avoid duplication of service programs and to prevent issuance of orders that unknowingly are counterproductive to existing treatment and rehabilitation efforts. Courts and human social service agencies benefit when liaisons are established and they communicate regularly with one another.

The Family Self-Sufficiency Scale developed by Jackson County, Oregon (see figure, page 104), is a particularly helpful index to measure family progress. A copy of this scale is kept in each family's folder, and the family court coordinator administers the scale periodically to measure outcomes.

### 3. Expedient and cost-effective dispute resolution

Courts need to provide families with the forum to resolve disputes without undue hardship, cost, or inconvenience. Court procedures that adjudicate cases involving children and families need to be simplified and readily accessible to the public, especially to unrepresented litigants. Economic barriers should not

### Family Self-Sufficiency Scale

Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Rating: Pre Progress Post Follow-up Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Rater (Name/Role): \_\_\_\_\_

Circle most descriptive rating words in each area. Use N/R to indicate "unable to rate."

Self-Sufficiency Area	Self-Sufficiency Continuum and Ratings				
	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Program Participation</b>	Refusing/resisting	Minimal/passive	Some involvement	Moderate involvement	Regular/active
<b>Child Care</b>	None	Friend/relative/unstable	Noncertified/stable	Certified/stable	Stable with backup
<b>Housing</b>	Homeless	Unstable/unsafe	Friend/family/residential program	Substandard rental	Adequate rental/own home
<b>Employment</b>	No/poor work history or job search	Employment training/job search	Subsidized work/ Jobs Plus	Part time/seasonal/temp*	Full time*
<b>Partner Relationship</b>	Current domestic violence/stalking	Recent DV harassment	Big conflict/issues/ recent sep/divorce	Adjusting/single	Healthy relationship or self-sufficient single
<b>Parent-Child Relationship</b>	Founded case abuse/neglect	Issues of abuse/neglect/poor parent-child relationship	Need parent-child relationship improvement	Adequate parent-child interaction	Healthy parent-child relationship
<b>Parent Education/Literacy</b>	HS dropout/ low literacy	Educational/ literacy assessment completed	Participating in ABE/GED/ESL literacy program	Finished basic ed/ functional literacy	Career training/ college
<b>Youth Risk/Resiliency</b>	Severe risk A&D/ delinq/drop out	High risk/multiple Problems	Moderate risk/ some issues	Low risk/ few issues	Successful youth development
<b>School Attendance</b>	Dropped out/ not enrolled	Frequent absences (without good cause)	Sporadic attendance/ chronic tardiness	Moderate absences/ tardiness	Regular attendance
<b>Family Health</b>	Emergent care only/ serious medical prob	Neglect of care/ no health provider	Identified medical provider	Periodic health care	Regular/preventative care
<b>Substance Abuse</b>	Suspected/denial/ no treatment	Admitted/confirmed/ no treatment	Screened/started TX/ little progress	In treatment/ making progress	Ongoing recovery/ functional
<b>Mental Health</b>	Severe or chronic/ in crisis/no TX	Assessed/needed TX; refused	Assessed/started TX	In treatment/ making progress	Ongoing recovery/ functional
<b>Community Involvement</b>	None/unhealthy community conflicts	Minimal; some previously	Occasional/uses community resources	Involved in 1+ community activities	Regular volunteer
<b>Level of Public Assistance</b>	Eligible but not participating	TANF/ cash assistance	FS/OHP/ERDC with co-pay retention	Off public assistance	Off public assistance 6 months
<b>Family Income</b>	Unable to meet basic needs	Meets basic needs/ debt/unpaid bills	Able to meet basic needs/ timely debt payment	Able to meet basic needs/some discretionary income	Able to pay bills with some discretionary income/savings
<b>Criminal Justice</b>	In jail	Supervised probation	Unsupervised probation	Finished probation	No recidivism for 6 months
<b>Transportation</b>	No vehicle and suspended/no license	Either no vehicle or no license	Unreliable car/ no insurance	Vehicle OK/ has license	License/insurance/ reliable vehicle

Pretest Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Put a #1 in scale boxes indicating pretest score

Post-test Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Put a #2 in scale boxes indicating post-test score

Protocol: standard confidentiality procedure

\*Write hourly wage in corner of these boxes

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prevent families from using courts. Night courts, information kiosks, and court child-care centers are examples of court efforts that give clients easier access to courts.<sup>21</sup> Clarifying legal proceedings for lay persons and eliminating confusion caused by excessive use of “legalese” are also priorities. Courts must acknowledge the difficulties encountered by the public in interpreting complex legal concepts, rules of law, and terms of art and must accept the responsibility to proactively assist unrepresented litigants.

#### 4. Timely case resolution

Timeliness is a consideration in the resolution of all disputes. It is especially critical when children are involved. Delay in resolution may cause a child to remain in a potentially dangerous situation or postpone his or her return to the home of a parent or placement with another relative. The length of time required to resolve general family issues also should be expedited, but not to the extent that the speed infringes on the parties’ due process rights. Timely resolution limits the exposure of families to emotionally charged issues that can have a detrimental impact on children and adults. In addition, family courts must always be mindful of the child’s sense of time.

To ensure timely case resolution, courts need to provide aggressive case management. From intake to case resolution, courts need to track a family’s progress through the court system. Eliminating duplicative and conflicting orders will also help move cases through the system.<sup>22</sup> Over the long term, a unified system can help cut costs through prevention efforts that help break the cycle of violence, so that in the future some families may avoid the courts altogether. It can also assist a community to pool its resources in innovative and useful ways, such as offering social services within the courthouse and using the community more as a service tool.

#### 5. Satisfaction of litigants

Client assessment of the judicial officer’s courtroom demeanor, the helpfulness of court staff, and the timeliness of court proceedings can measure whether children and families are treated with objectivity, dignity, and respect. Court clients, however, also have responsibilities to complete service plans, comply with court orders, and, ultimately, achieve sufficient strength to leave the supervision of courts and service agencies.

### CONCLUSION

A family-focused court provides an effective judicial response to intrafamilial problems.<sup>23</sup> Courts make critical

decisions in the lives of children, and these decisions need to be made thoughtfully and at the proper pace. Many of the family-focused models discussed here, such as the one-family/one-judicial-officer model, the unified case management approaches, and the coordination of services between courts and agencies, will help courts to help families.

Courts need to make a real commitment to families not only so that their cases are heard and resolved, but also so that the problems of families and children are actively addressed and treated rather than exacerbated. Family-focused courts treat families holistically by placing each case within the context of their overall family history. Family-focused courts should treat families efficiently to coordinate the delivery of services, humanely to minimize the strain of the court process, and fairly to respect each member’s due process rights. Finally, all of these practices need to be evaluated to determine how well the family-focused court is operating.

1. H. TED RUBIN & VICTOR EUGENE FLANGO, COURT COORDINATION OF FAMILY CASES (National Ctr. for State Courts 1992). Research found that 40 percent of families came to court for more than one case. These repeat litigants generate a disproportionate number of family law cases.
2. EXAMINING THE WORK OF STATE COURTS 1998: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE FROM THE COURT STATISTICS PROJECT (Brian J. Ostrom & Neal Kauder eds., National Ctr. for State Courts 1999).
3. *See* COMMISSION ON STANDARDS OF JUDICIAL ADMIN., AMERICAN BAR ASS’N, COURT ORGANIZATION (American Bar Ass’n 1990).
4. CAROL R. FLANGO ET AL., HOW ARE COURTS COORDINATING FAMILY CASES? 34–35 (National Ctr. for State Courts 1999). This monograph discusses the approach developed in Bend, Oregon.
5. *King County Unified Family Court Project*, in ABA SUMMIT ON UNIFIED FAMILY COURTS: EXPLORING SOLUTIONS FOR FAMILIES, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN, at R-1 (American Bar Ass’n 1998).
6. AMERICAN BAR ASS’N, AMERICA’S CHILDREN AT RISK: A NATIONAL AGENDA FOR LEGAL ACTION 54 (ABA 1993) (report of the Presidential Working Group on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children and Their Families).
7. Catherine J. Ross, *The Failure of Fragmentation: The Promise of a System of Unified Family Courts*, 32 FAM. L.Q. 17 (Spring 1998).

### NOTES

NOTES 8. *Id.* at 18.

9. Jeffrey A. Kuhn, *A Seven-Year Lesson on Unified Family Courts: What We Have Learned Since the 1990 National Family Court Symposium*, 32 FAM. L.Q. 77-79 (1998).

10. FLANGO ET AL., *supra* note 4, at 40.

11. *Id.* at 43.

12. *Id.* at 44; Stephen N. Tiktin & Ernest J. Mazorol III, *Family Court Coordination of Human Services, Deschutes County, Oregon*, 35 FAM. & CONCILIATION CTS. REV. 344 (July 1997).

13. Donald N. Duquette & Sarah H. Ramsey, *Representation of Children in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases: An Empirical Look at What Constitutes Effective Representation*, 20 U. MICH. J.L. REFORM 341 (1987).

14. Tiktin & Mazorol, *supra* note 12, at 344-45.

15. MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASS'N, COMBINED JURISDICTION COMMITTEE REPORT (1995) (unpublished report adopted by the General Assembly June 23, 1995).

16. FLANGO ET AL., *supra* note 4, at 64.

17. *Jefferson Family Court Project*, in ABA SUMMIT ON UNIFIED FAMILY COURTS, *supra* note 5, at T.

18. FLANGO ET AL., *supra* note 4, at 77.

19. Interview with Jim Adams, Jackson County Court Administrator, in Jackson County (Sept. 1998).

20. *See* BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE & NATIONAL CTR. FOR STATE COURTS, TRIAL COURT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS (U.S. Dep't of Justice 1997).

21. A national conference on the future of courts suggested that courts extend their hours of operation and stay open on weekends. JAMES DATOR & WILLIAM ROGERS, THE FUTURE AND THE COURTS CONFERENCE, executive summary at 17 (National Ctr. for State Courts 1990).

22. Pursuant to federal regulation, juvenile dependency cases (and delinquency cases, if the ward is in foster eligible placement) must adhere to a strict timeline regarding the required scheduling of the overall process, detention, jurisdiction, disposition, reviews, permanency planning, and other issues. *See, e.g.*, 45 C.F.R. § 1356.21(b)(1)-(2), (h), (i) (2000).

23. Robert W. Page, *Family Courts: An Effective Judicial Approach to the Resolution of Family Disputes*, 44 FAM. & JUV. CT. J. 1-57 (Winter 1993).